

Town of Somers Point
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
East of U.S. Highway 9, North of State Route 52
Somers Point
Atlantic County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1042

HABS
NJ
1-SOMPO
2-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF SOMERS POINT

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Location: East of U.S. Highway 9, North of State Route 52, Somers Point, Northern side of the Great Egg Harbor Bay, Atlantic County, New Jersey.

Significance: Somers Point was first settled by Quakers in the late seventeenth-century. The town was significant as the port of entry for the Great Egg Harbor into the nineteenth century.

History: Somers Point was named after John Somers, who purchased 3,000 acres when he settled here in 1693. He was a Quaker as were many of the early residents of the area. The supervisor of roads and constable for Great Egg Harbor in 1693, Somers established a ferry across the Great Egg Bay, running between Job's Point, now Somers Point, and Beesley's Point. It was not for another twenty-one years, however, that the first public road in Atlantic County was laid out. It ran between the Nacote Creek, now known as Port Republic, and the ferry at Job's Point.¹

Somers Point served as the port of entry for Great Egg Harbor for many years, with a custom's House located there from 1791 until 1912. In 1834, the town consisted of several farmhouses, a tavern and boarding house. By 1850 there were at least two hotels run by Richard L. Somers and Constantine Somers,² increased to three by 1872, with W. E. Braddock as the proprietor of the Dolphin House, John Gouldey running the Somers Point Hotel, and R. B. Somers owning the Sea Side Cottage.³ Somers's son, Richard, built a two-story stone dwelling known as the Somers Mansion, which still stands today, near the water's edge in Somers Point. The borough of Somers Point was formed in 1886, reincorporated in 1890, and incorporated as a city in 1902.⁴

Today, Somers Point extends from Route 9 to the shore facing Longport. With heavier commercial development concentrated along the old Main Shore Road, Somers Point integrates neighborhoods, local businesses and municipal buildings. Running perpendicular to Route 9 to the marina, New York Avenue passes residential streets, the New York Avenue School, the post office and Shore Memorial Hospital. A variety of shops form Harbour Cove Marina, a complex that seems to include the Harbour Cove condominiums. These multi-level shingled buildings surround the

¹ William McMahon, Historic South Jersey Towns (Atlantic City: Press Publishing Co., 1964), 63-4. William McMahon, South Jersey Towns: History and Legend (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973.), 234.

² McMahon, Historic South Jersey Towns, 65; Kirkbride, "New Jersey Directory of 1850" in Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook 9 (October 1980), 19.

³ Beers, F. W. "Topographical Map of Atlantic County, New Jersey." Philadelphia: Beers, Comstock and Cline, 1872.

⁴ John L. Kay and Chester M. Smith, Jr., New Jersey Postal History (Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1977), 29; John P. Snyder, The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries: 1606-1968 (Trenton: Bureau of Geology and Topography, 1969), 70.

marina area, obscuring entrance to several docks where yachts wait for their owners. Despite its quiet streets, Somers Point seems stretched to capacity; residents must battle the commercial "strip" traffic to reach shopping areas outside the city.

Prepared by: Camille Gatza
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- Sources: Beers, F. W. "Topographical Map of Atlantic County, New Jersey." Philadelphia: Beers, Comstock and Cline, 1872.
- Kay, John L., and Smith, Chester M., Jr. New Jersey Postal History. Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1977.
- Kirkbride, "New Jersey Directory of 1850" in Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook 9. October 1980.
- McMahon, William. Historic South Jersey Towns. Atlantic City: Press Publishing Co., 1964.
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- _____. South Jersey Towns: History and Legend. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973.
- Snyder, John P. The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries: 1606-1968. Trenton: Bureau of Geology and Topography, 1969.

Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.